Remarks of Chairman Henry J. Hyde Before the Full Committee "The U.S. - India 'Global Partnership"

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Madame Secretary, it is a pleasure to have you before us once again. Yours is becoming an increasingly familiar face here, and it is a welcome one.

Your personal involvement regarding the U.S.-India "global partnership" testifies to the importance the Administration places on this initiative, a focus which is shared by all Members of this Committee. Given the profound nature of this initiative and its potential consequences for good or ill, it is our intention to proceed carefully and thoroughly, but with all deliberate speed.

As part of that process, I would like to take this opportunity not to comment on the merits of the agreement itself but instead to lay out what I believe are some of the principal issues and points of contention on which Members of the Committee will need additional information in order to make an informed decision. I welcome my colleagues to add to this brief list.

In general, this new and multi-faceted initiative with India that has been termed a "global partnership" has been widely hailed as a bold and encouraging development. I personally know of no one who is not in favor of improved relations and enhanced cooperation between the United States and India, which to my mind and that of many others is long overdue. Such disagreement as exists on this subject centers primarily on its perceived importance in strategic terms and on the depth and extent of the anticipated cooperation.

Some see a nascent and far-reaching alliance between our two countries that will have a dramatic, perhaps even transforming, geostrategic impact. Others place this new relationship in a more modest context, viewing it as a useful endeavor but far from heralding a fundamental change in the nature of our relationship or in the balance of power in Asia.

The same general welcoming attitude extends to the several areas of specific cooperation outlined in the joint statement of July 18th, embracing economic relations, promoting democracy, countering terrorism, combating AIDS, enhancing energy resources, and many other worthy endeavors. There is some dissent regarding the wisdom of inviting India's participation in the international fusion research project and offering cooperation on space programs, as the first seen as potentially aiding its weapons program and the latter its missile program. But these concerns are not central to consideration of the merits of the initiative as a whole.

As all are aware, the principal area of contention by far concerns the proposal to open up civil nuclear trade, specifically, its possible detrimental impact on U.S. and global nonproliferation policy. This subject is of particular interest to this Committee because it has

jurisdiction over the legislation that will be required to allow civil nuclear trade to take place. Given the centrality of this issue in the debate, and because it is the centerpiece of this Committee's responsibility, I will focus my remaining remarks on it.

To better comprehend the debate, I have found it useful to divide the issues into three sections. The first concerns whether or not the civil nuclear agreement in itself enhances or undermines U.S. and global nonproliferation policy. If one arrives at a positive conclusion, then support of the overall agreement is axiomatic. If the judgment is negative, then a second question occurs, namely: Are these negative consequences so grave that they outweigh the potential benefits of the overall agreement?

If the judgment is that the asymmetry renders the whole a net negative, a third question arises, namely: Are there changes to the civil nuclear provisions that can be made that would be sufficient to persuade opponents to support the package as a whole?

Of necessity, the answers to all of these questions are highly subjective, depending upon how one weighs the intrinsic and relative merits of the various provisions, their likely impact, and other considerations. But even subjective conclusions require accurate information and thorough debate if they are to be arrived at responsibly.

I will end my remarks there. I will not offer an exhaustive list of questions, as any observer can easily generate scores of questions of their own. But this briefly sketched logical progression seems to me to be a good way of approaching the subject that will permit an informed judgment on a subject of great complexity and potentially far-reaching impact.

I now turn to my friend, Tom Lantos, the Ranking Democratic Member, for any remarks he may wish to make.